

Message Text

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ORIGIN PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
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TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO SECDEF

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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: MARR, MNUC, AS

SUBJECT:NPW PORT ACCESS IN AUSTRALIA -- DR. WILSON PROPOSAL

REF: SECSTATE 240702 (DTG 281609Z SEP 76) NOTAL

1. SUMMARY. AS ANTICIPATED IN REFTEL, STATE AND DOD REPRESENTATIVES MET WITH DR. ALAN WILSON IN WASHINGTON OCTOBER 4. DR. WILSON PRESENTED AN UNOFFICIAL, PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL WHICH HE THOUGHT MIGHT ENABLE GOA TO PROVIDE MORE CONVENIENT BERTHS FOR U.S. NPWS. WHILE WE APPRECIATE HIS EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE BERTHING SITUATION, AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION, WE DO NOT FEEL WE CAN PURSUE THE PROPOSAL SINCE TO DO SO COULD JEOPARDIZE THE BASIS ON WHICH WE VISIT ELSEWHERE. EMBASSY IS REQUESTED TO INFORM DR. WILSON AND OTHER GOA OFFICIALS, AS APPROPRIATE, OF USG
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RESPONSE. END SUMMARY.

2. DR. WILSON, IN PRELUDE TO HIS PROPOSAL, MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WAS ACTING AS AN INTERESTED OBSERVER AT THIS POINT IN TIME, NOT IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY EITHER AS A CONSULTANT TO ADOD OR AS HEAD OF THE REGULATORY AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS BRANCH OF THE AAEC. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING, HE PROVIDED A PAPER WHICH OUTLINES THE RATIONALE FOR THE PROPOSAL AND THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ITS OPERATION.

TEXT AS FOLLOWS:

QUOTE. LACKING PRECISE DESIGN AND OPERATING INFORMATION ON NAVAL NUCLEAR PROPULSION PLANTS THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN FORCED TO USE CONSERVATIVE ASSUMPTIONS IN ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY OF PARTICULAR BERTHS FOR USE BY U.S. NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIPS. THIS HAS LED THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO ATTACH CONDITIONS TO THE USE OF SOME BERTHS FOR WHICH U.S. HAS EXPRESSED A PREFERENCE. NOTING THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS UNABLE TO PROVIDE THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WITH THE TECHNICAL INFORMATION REGARDING U.S. NAVAL NUCLEAR PROPULSION PLANTS WHICH MIGHT ENABLE THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO REMOVE THESE CONDITIONS, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF ESTABLISHING THE SAFETY OF ALLOWING U.S. NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIPS TO USE PARTICULAR BERTHS.

THE AUSTRALIAN OFFICIALS SOUGHT A PRELIMINARY REACTION FROM U.S. OFFICIALS TO A SUGGESTION THAT VISITS MIGHT BE ACCEPTED ON THE BASIS OF A U.S. ASSURANCE THAT A NATIONAL REGULATORY COMMISSION REACTOR SAFETY ASSESSMENT SHOWED THAT THE RADIOACTIVITY RELEASES ASSOCIATED WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACCIDENT, IN THE PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE VISIT, SHOULD NOT EXCEED THE LIMITS SPECIFIED BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FOR THE PARTICULAR BERTH INVOLVED. THE AUSTRALIAN OFFICIALS SUGGESTED THAT BECAUSE THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE NO MEANS OF KNOWING THE PARTICULAR DESIGN, OPERATING AND EMERGENCY CONSIDERATIONS ASSUMED IN THE N.R.C. ASSESSMENT, THE PROVISION OF SUCH AN ASSURANCE WOULD NOT INVOLVE THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IN COMMUNICATING ANY MEANINGFUL
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INFORMATION ON U.S. NAVAL NUCLEAR PROPULSION PLANT.

THE AUSTRALIAN OFFICIALS STRESSED THAT THEIR APPROACH WAS PURELY EXPLORATORY AND THAT, AT THIS STAGE, THERE WAS NO CERTAINTY THAT THE SUGGESTED PROCEDURE WOULD SATISFY AUSTRALIAN REQUIREMENTS. THE AUSTRALIAN OFFICIALS SAID THAT A PRELIMINARY REACTION TO THE PROPOSAL WOULD ENABLE THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO DECIDE WHETHER THERE WAS ANY

POINT TO SEEKING TO EXPLORE IT FURTHER. END QUOTE

3. DR. WILSON'S PROPOSAL HAS BEEN CAREFULLY CONSIDERED BY THE WASHINGTON COMMUNITY. WE APPRECIATE HIS SINCERE AND INNOVATIVE PROPOSAL TO FIND AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS TO DETERMINE MORE DESIRABLE BERTHS ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH SIDES. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE IN OUR GLOBAL INTEREST TO PURSUE HIS PROPOSAL. IN OUR VIEW, ONCE HAVING ACCEPTED SUCH A PROCEDURE, IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY

DIFFICULT TO AVOID ACCEPTING A SIMILAR PROCEDURE WITH ANY OTHER COUNTRY WE VISIT. THE USG THEN WOULD BE IN THE POSITION OF AGREEING TO AND THUS IMPLICITLY ENDORSING A NUMBER OF DIFFERING CRITERIA, APPLIED ON A COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY BASIS, WHICH COULD RESULT IN JEOPARDIZING NPW PORT ACCESS WORLD-WIDE. OUR STANDARD STATEMENT PROVIDES AN ASSURANCE THAT U.S. CRITERIA WILL BE APPLIED UNIFORMLY WORLD-WIDE. WE, OF COURSE, ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DECISION, NAMELY, THAT U.S. NPWS WILL CONTINUE TO USE ONLY CATEGORY C BERTHS AS DETERMINED BY THE GOA, AS HAS BEEN THE CASE FOR THE FOUR RECENT NPW VISITS.

4. IT IS OUR VIEW THAT DR. WILSON'S PROPOSAL FOR DETERMINING THE ACCEPTABILITY OF BERTHS IS SEPARATE AND DISTINCT FROM THE GAMMA MONITORING ISSUE. ACCORDINGLY, EMBASSY IS REQUESTED TO INFORM DR. WILSON AND OTHER GOA OFFICIALS, AS APPROPRIATE, NOW OF OUR VIEWS IN PARA 3 ABOVE. GOA OFFICIALS MAY BE ADVISED THAT MONITORING WILL BE HANDLED IN DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS.

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5. FYI. WE ALSO ARE ADVISING AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF HERE OF CONTENTS OF THIS TELEGRAM. END FYI.

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Message Attributes

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